

1 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Gary Williams.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Madam Chairman and Commission members,
3 welcome and fellow Arizonans -- well, first let me say thanks to
4 all of you that have supported Indian gaming in this great land.
5 My name is Gary Arnold Williams and I am from the Gila River
6 indigenous community. I have recently received by bachelor's
7 degree in fine arts. The procedures institute that I attended
8 was the Disney School of Animation, formerly known as the
9 California Institute of the Arts. Many hopeful applicants
10 worldwide apply here every year to the prestigious school of
11 higher learning and many are turned away.

12 In my history of the application process 2,000 were
13 in competition for acceptance, only 67 were picked. After
14 acceptance I later learned I was the only Native America to have
15 ever been accepted in this program of character animation. Since
16 then I have seen many other applicants start the program but
17 later leave the program due to funding. I use the word
18 "competition" because life is and always will be a competition.
19 From what I've learned thus far in my life, education is the best
20 source of protection to compete and without this my journey would
21 definitely be different. Without the financial assistance of the
22 Gila River Indian casino and the Gila River Education Committee
23 this achievement would not have been possible.

24 I was raised by the state, Department of Economic
25 Security to be more specific, that covers eight foster homes,
26 shelters and even an institution. All along not once was I
27 allowed to be placed with my Native American Nation of Arizona.
28 I stand before you today as a recipient of child abuse, denial of

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1 heritage and culture and denial of self. I remember being
2 labeled as a problem child, a slow learner and an outsider.
3 These titles are not easy to forget as a child and one thing I
4 must mention that kept me going through all of this is being
5 humble.

6 I knew that as long as they didn't kill me, it was
7 okay. As long as I could eat tomorrow, it was okay. As long as
8 the medication would cease, it would be okay. Many days I have
9 spent in my life crying, trying to keep focused, trying to keep
10 moving and knowing that some day I would be an adult so that my
11 choices in my life would be mine alone. As I look around me
12 today I'm trying to reconnect with my people, the very same
13 people that I was once denied. As an adult, I see my people
14 given an opportunity of change.

15 This change has brought many good things and a change
16 that will bring many more. I ask you today, do not deny us this
17 opportunity, do not deny our children their opportunity in life
18 and do not deny this great nation of ours an opportunity of
19 positive history, history we call can be proud of, one that we
20 all may write about and share, one that our societies may share
21 and talk about. There are issues of health, education and water,
22 the very essence to exist that this opportunity is holding in my
23 future. Let me be selfish for once. Do not deny me my future.
24 Some day I have hopes of returning for my master's degree. Some
25 day I have hopes of having my own family.

26 One of the most important memories in my life is
27 returning to my community with a bachelor's degree and seeing the
28 changes that have taken place there. The wheels of change are

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1 turning and I'm especially glad to see them. So, please, I ask
2 you to let the change continue, let us all make a positive
3 history together, may all your steps be positive and your
4 relations be ones of enjoyment. Thank you, very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON JAMES: Thank you. Alexis Johnson.

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